

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 SAJ-01

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P R 301922Z SEP 76

FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5600

INFO AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMCONSUL BORDEAUX

AMCONSUL STRASBOURG

AMCONSUL NICE

AMCONSUL LYON

AMCONSUL MARSEILLE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 28786

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT FR

SUBJECT: CHIRAC CALLS FOR EXTRAORDINARY NATIONAL CON-
VENTION OF GAULLIST PARTY

REF: PARIS 26801; PARIS 26960

SUMMARY: CHIRAC HAS CALLED FOR AN EXTRAORDINARY CONVEN-
TION OF THE GAULLIST RANK AND FILE. IF IT IS HELD, THE
CONVENTION WILL ACCLAIM CHIRAC AS THEIR LEADER. THIS
IS THE OPENING OF CHIRAC'S CAMPAIGN FOR THE PRESIDENCY
WHICH IS BASED ON HIS ASSUMING LEADERSHIP OF THE HERE-
TOFORE NEGLECTED POLITICAL RIGHT. EMBASSY THINKS THIS
IS A POSITIVE DEVELOPMENT SINCE IT WOULD BE UNFORTUNATE
IF MITTERRAND WERE THE ONLY ALTERNATIVE TO GISCARD.
END SUMMARY.

BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED

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1. ON THE FIRST DAY OF AN IMPORTANT GAULLIST PARLIAMENTARY SEMINAR, FORMER PRIME MINISTER CHIRAC RELEASED A LETTER TO UDR SECRETARY GENERAL YVES GUENA REQUESTING THAT AN EXTRAORDINARY NATIONAL CONVENTION OF THE UDR PARTY BE HELD AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. IN HIS LETTER CHIRAC SAID THAT THE PURPOSE OF THE EXTRAORDINARY CONVENTION SHOULD BE TO ENLARGE AND TRANSFORM THE MOVEMENT SO AS TO REGROUP ALL THOSE WHO WANT TO WORK FOR THE VICTORY OF DEMOCRACY, LIBERTY, INDIVIDUAL DIGNITY AND SOCIAL PROGRESS. IN A PUBLIC RESPONSE FROM THE SITE OF THE UDR SEMINAR, SECRETARY GENERAL YVES GUENA EXPRESSED PERSONAL SUPPORT FOR CHIRAC'S PROPOSAL, AND SAID THE PARTY CENTRAL COMMITTEE WILL MAKE A DECISION AT ITS NEXT MEETING ON OCTOBER 23. IF THE DECISION IS FAVORABLE, GUENA SAID THE EXTRAORDINARY CONGRESS COULD BE HELD BEFORE THE END OF THE YEAR. HE SAID THAT FRENCH POLITICS HAVE ENTERED A NEW PHASE SINCE THE CHANGE OF GOVERNMENT LAST AUGUST, AND IT IS ONLY NATURAL THAT THE UDR LEADERSHIP CONSULT THE RANK AND FILE AT AN EXTRAORDINARY CONVENTION. END UNCLASSIFIED.

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2. CHIRAC'S INITIATIVE HAS THE FOLLOWING OBJECTIVES:

A. KEEP HIS NAME IN THE HEADLINES. HE DID NOT ATTEND THE UDR SEMINAR BECAUSE HE IS NOT CURRENTLY A MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT. HE COULD NOT LET THE OCCASION GO BY, ESPECIALLY WITH PRIME MINISTER BARRE SCHEDULED TO SPEAK TO THE UDR GATHERING, WITHOUT PRE-EMPTING THE SCENE.

B. CHIRAC WANTS TO REASSERT THE CONTROL OVER THE UDR WHICH HE HAS HELD SINCE HE BECAME PRIME MINISTER.

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HIS MAIL SINCE HIS RESIGNATION INDICATES THAT HE CONTINUES TO BE VERY POPULAR WITH THE UDR RANK AND FILE. AN EXTRAORDINARY NATIONAL CONVENTION (THE NEXT REGULAR ONE IS NOT SCHEDULED TO BE HELD UNTIL 1978) WOULD BRING TOGETHER 10,000 UDR MEMBERS FROM EVERY ELECTORAL DISTRICT IN FRANCE. THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT SUCH A MEETING WOULD ACCLAIM CHIRAC AS THE LEADER, WITH THE UDR BARONS AGAIN HAVING TO KNUCKLE UNDER IN A SECONDARY ROLE AS THEY DID AT THE LAST CONVENTION IN 1975.

C. IN A MORE PROFOUND SENSE, CHIRAC'S LETTER REPRESENTS THE OPENING OF HIS CAMPAIGN TO BECOME PRESIDENT OF FRANCE. HIS STATEMENT THAT THE GAULLIST MOVEMENT SHOULD BE ENLARGED TO REGROUP ALL THOSE WHO SEEK THE VICTORY OF DEMOCRACY MARKS HIS ENTRY INTO THE PRESIDENTIAL SCENE AS THE EXCLUSIVE REPRESENTATIVE OF FRANCE'S CONFIDENTIAL

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POLITICAL RIGHT, A SIGNIFICANT ELEMENT OF FRENCH SOCIETY THAT GISCARD HAS DECIDED TO TAKE FOR GRANTED. TO FILL THIS VACUUM ON THE RIGHT, GISCARD IS USING THE UDR AS HIS BASE. BUT WITH THE UDR IN AN ELECTORAL DECLINE, HE MUST REACH OUT FROM THAT BASE TO ALL THOSE WHO SEE THE NEXT ELECTIONS AS A CHOICE BETWEEN A FREE AND A COLLECTIVIST SOCIETY.

3. COMMENT: EMBASSY DOES NOT BELIEVE CHIRAC'S OPERATION NECESSARILY PUTS HIM INTO A STATE OF OPPOSITION WITH RESPECT TO GISCARD. AS A MATTER OF PRACTICAL POLITICS, WHAT CHIRAC IS TRYING TO DO COMPLEMENTS

GISCARD'S CONTINUING EFFORT TO ATTRACT CENTRIST VOTERS WHO HAVE STRAYED OVER TO MITTERRAND. BOTH HAVE THE SAME OBJECTIVE OF DEFEATING THE UNION OF THE LEFT IN 1978. IN ADDITION, CHIRAC ALSO WANTS TO BE PRESIDENT. BUT THIS REPRESENTS NO CHANGE. HE HAD THE SAME AMBITION WHEN HE WAS PRIME MINISTER. FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF AMERICAN INTERESTS, IT IS VERY IMPORTANT THAT CHIRAC MAINTAIN HIS POSITION IN THE LIMELIGHT OF FRENCH POLITICS AS A POTENTIAL ALTERNATIVE IF GISCARD SHOULD FALTER ANYWHERE ALONG THE LINE BETWEEN NOW AND 1981 AND BEYOND. IT WOULD BE UNFORTUNATE TO HAVE MITTERRAND AS THE ONLY ALTERNATIVE.

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